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Rhetorical Analysis

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Colton Clanton

Third-Place Winner

Short Essay Category

2019 Emerging Writers Contest

Rhetorical Analysis

Have you ever contemplated your existence and the path for you to take in order to get the most happiness and general good out of your life? These quiet contemplations are the thoughts that nag at the back of most people's minds through every waking moment. Kingsolver's essay *You Can't Run Away on Harvest Day* draws you in with vivid imagery then puts a lot of thought and emphasis on just these answers by giving many different views and then applying her own view to each one. She does this by using many logical points in her argument that seem fairly simple and reasonable yet never get pointed out.

Her use of logical debate makes an argument from any solid ground rather difficult because she knows everything she's talking about and is very confident on her stances. She brings up many points about how her own diet is basically just anti-cruelty; she'll eat meat as long as she knows it had a good prior life. This is reassured for her because she grows her own meat and wears her dirty duties on her sleeve. She accepts what she has to do and even invites her "adventurous friends" to partake in harvest with her. Some people say that you shouldn't kill animals, especially those that you raised yourself. She very quickly and easy counteracts this claim by stating that most people never raise anything for any other sole purpose of a companion pet and the only other exposure is seeing exotic animals. She shows how it is different when you have raised the animal with a happy life and for the sole purpose of harvesting it. She presents an

argument that is difficult for regular people to refute as they do not possess the experience to say anything otherwise that could prove it still wrong.

Kingsolver is also very swift and controlled in toppling the moral high ground of those who say that anything non-meat based is always the better choice. She presents a logical argument about how all of these items must be grown on land originally meant for other plants AND animals, that these items must be shipped from origin to market, that these items must be wrapped in plastic, that these items were produced using many pesticides and chemical that are incredibly harmful to the environment, and that these items take many fossil fuels from start to finish to make it to the customers. She argues instead to eat local and humanely maintained meat and that it actually reduces overall suffering of the food produced specifically for you. In reducing the suffering made for the meals she also talks about the lives of the plants and how it takes many numerous plants to make one meal, but one animal can make multiple meals on its own. She uses logical reasoning to deconstruct the theory that animal lives are over that of plants or insects.

Kingsolver's kids also talk about a celebrity that wishes to make a farm which will never harvest anything of the animals. This ideology is good for anyone who lives unwittingly to the world we actually live in. That the animals we have made over the years absolutely NEED to be harvested. Her two main examples being that cows need to be milked or else they suffer pain from overfilling and that chickens if left unchecked will quickly overpopulate anyplace that they are left to just breed freely and live full lives. That by "preserving" their lives you are actually creating much more suffering down the line. As she later points out these animals would no longer survive in the wild as they are easy to prey on or need constant human upkeep.

Kingsolver also brings up the fact that many people, “declare one single forbidden fruit, when humans live under so many different kinds of trees”. Here she is trying to show that there isn’t just one thing we should look at and focus down, that we in fact have tons of choices to make that could help reduce suffering and make the world a better place. She herself does take a stance to what path she believes would produce the most good but admits that its not the only one and that we can all do a lot with a lot of different areas to be better. She points at that this is especially true for poor areas that can’t grow many plants due to climate, topography, or economic inequality. These areas and people can’t afford the vegan argument or most of the time any argument outside of how to get their next bite.

Including people from other life styles, she even talks about a friend who grew up in the U.K. that gives her outside perspective of the United States. She says that we focus too much on death and never really think about just enjoying each moment and living to the best of what we can. She says we think overly hard on how to cheat death and that we basically ignore giving thanks for the life we’ve even been lucky enough to get in the first place. A life that will eventually come full circle and get back into the energy of the world. We can’t cheat death and turn down the one guarantee made to every creature, that our time WILL end one way or another.

In the end her use of logic to disrupt all main arguments against her is very effective as it feels almost wrong to not even listen to her or take in her argument. The experience and confidence with which she writes with makes it almost unbelievable that she isn’t just correct, that this way seems like a viable solution to how we can lower suffering almost around the board at least locally. Her logic makes it easier to hope that maybe it isn’t hard for us to live good lives

with those around us. That we should just take a step back and really look at what it is we are given and how we can make the most of it while each of us has the life we're given.